

**SUMMARY OF THE
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
September 13, 2000**

The Accrediting Authority Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, September 13, 2000, at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. John P. Anderson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Division of Laboratories. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. John Anderson, Chairman, opened the meeting and welcomed the new members to the committee and expressed appreciation for their willingness to serve. The new members participating for the first time as appointed committee members were Ms. Sharon Mertens, Ms. Roxanne Robinson and Mr. Scott Hoatson. The committee then accepted the agenda which had been distributed to each committee member prior to the meeting.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

The committee first discussed candidates to fill the 2005 Voting Member vacancy on the committee roster. After discussion, several individuals were deemed well qualified to fill the vacancy. The Chair was directed to call a designated individual and solicit him/her to accept an appointment to the Accrediting Authority Committee.

After an overview discussion on the current status of Chapter 6, including comments the committee members have heard regarding experiences garnered during NELAP's first round of the accrediting authority recognition process, it was concluded that no revisions to the chapter need be initiated by the committee at this time. It was felt that additional experience in processing accrediting authority applications for NELAP recognition would be helpful before any "fine tuning" of the standards currently contained in Chapter 6 is undertaken. Further, the committee has received no proposals for changes to the current language contained in the Chapter.

A question posed to the committee by New Hampshire through Jeanne Hankins generated a lengthy and wide-ranging discussion of Chapter 6 requirements and NELAP policies and standard operating procedures for recognition of accrediting authorities. Specifically, the questioner was inquiring as to the procedure for a NELAP-recognized accrediting authority to request and receive an expansion of the fields of testing for which it is already NELAP recognized. This question, coupled with an inquiry from Jeanne Hankins as to the committee's willingness to assist in developing a Quality Systems Manual for NELAP, led to other implementation questions about the application-review process for applicant accrediting authorities.

Fundamentally, the committee's main concern is that NELAC standards are uniformly applied and enforced across all NELAP-recognized accrediting authorities. While the committee recognizes and appreciates the excellent report issued at NELAC VI by the recently-activated Accrediting Authority Review Board (AARB), the committee members feel that the AARB could be even more effective if a quality system-like document were in place upon which it could base its annual report on NELAP operations to the NELAC annual meeting. At least two options exist for developing such a document. One option would be to develop a separate Quality Systems Manual that would be written and updated as necessary by the NELAP staff. Another option would be to incorporate procedural/quality system standards within Chapter 6, possibly as an appendix.

Yet another question is the extent to which NELAP should be compliant with ISO guidelines. Compliance with ISO guidelines would be necessary if NELAP is to become a full participant in international environmental laboratory accreditation programs. Many commercial laboratories believe it is important for NELAP to do so.

The committee recognizes that while the issues discussed above have been raised in committee meetings several times over the past three years or so, it has not devoted significant time to discussion of these concerns because it was concentrating on development of a workable set of standards for recognition of accrediting authorities. The committee members feel that now it is time to address the concerns described above.

Therefore, the committee directed the Chair to appoint a sub-committee charged with the responsibility to assist NELAP in the development of a Quality Systems Manual for the processes by which accrediting authorities become NELAP recognized. In developing such a manual, the committee is to consider and address to the greatest extent possible the issues discussed above, along with other issues that might surface during their deliberations. The committee is to known as the Quality Systems Sub-committee. Those appointed to the Quality Systems Sub-committee are:

Mr. Louis Johnson, Chair
Ms. Roxanne Robinson
Mr. Scott Hoatson

Mr. Anderson also was directed to contact Ms. Jeanne Hankins and ask her to furnish the Quality Systems Sub-committee with all the checklists and other documents used by NELAP during the first round of the application-review process for NELAP recognition of accrediting authorities.

Lastly, the committee turned its attention to planning for the NELAC VIi interim meeting. It was decided that the committee's discussion at the interim meeting would be focused mostly on the issues set forth above. It is not the committee's intention to propose language for addressing these issues at the interim meeting. Rather, it is anticipated that input from the larger NELAP community would be sought with a view toward building a consensus of how these issues would be approached and

addressed. The sub-committee was asked to prepare a framework for guiding the discussion at the interim meeting.

The committee decided to hold another teleconference one to two weeks prior to the interim meeting to finalize plans for the discussion expected at the interim meeting.

Mr. Scott Hoatson was directed to select a fine restaurant for the committee to enjoy an evening of fun and fellowship (including dinner) at the interim meeting. This event will be held on Tuesday evening, October 31, 2000. Time and place to be announced. Of course, guests and other individuals who wish they were a member of the Accrediting Authority committee are welcome!

There being no further business, the committee adjourned at about 4:15 p.m. EDT.

Attachment A

**ACTION ITEMS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2000**

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Ms. Robinson was directed to obtain an electronic copy of the NACLA document entitled, "Accreditation Body Recognition Procedure." She is to distribute it to each committee member.	Done
2.	Mr. Anderson was directed to ask Ms. Jeanne Hankins to provide copies of all checklists and procedural documents used by NELAP during the first round of reviewing applications from accrediting authorities for NELAP recognition.	Done - Awaiting response from Ms. Hankins
3.	The Quality Systems Sub-committee is to present a progress report to the entire committee at the committee's next teleconference.	At the teleconference to be held prior to NELAC VIi.
4.	Mr. Hoatson is to select a restaurant suitable for hosting an Accrediting Authority Committee dinner party on the evening of October 31, 2000.	October 31, 2000

**PARTICIPANTS
ACCREDITING AUTHORITY COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 4, 2000**

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